

## Louisville, Kentucky Obesity Prevention

*"It's one thing to urge people to eat five to nine servings of fresh fruits and vegetables daily; it's quite another thing to actually do this when you don't have a car, when the nearest supermarket is miles away and when you live in a neighborhood riddled with fast food restaurants and convenience stores that carry only junk food."* Dr. Adewale Troutman, Director, Louisville Metro Department of Public Health & Wellness

*"We well understand that systems, policy and social and physical environments have a powerful influence on health outcomes."* Jerry E. Abramson, Mayor

### **COMMUNITY OVERVIEW**

- The Louisville Metropolitan area, located in north central Kentucky, has a population of 701,500, of which 76% are White, 19% are African American, 2% are Latino, and 3% are another race.
- The community includes a mix of urban, suburban and rural areas covering some 386 square miles and is enriched by several diverse cultural influences from the industrial Midwest and the agrarian South.
- Approximately 18% of residents age 25 years or older have not earned a high school diploma and nearly 50% of them have never attended college.

### **COMMUNITY HEALTH PROBLEMS**

- In the 12 target neighborhoods, 80% of residents are overweight or obese, compared to 60% in Louisville and 65% in Kentucky.
- There is only one full-service grocer per 25,000 residents in the target neighborhoods compared to a county-wide ratio of one grocer per 12,500 residents.
- Only 6% of the sample population reported eating five or more servings of fruits or vegetables each day compared to 27% for the city, 17% for the state.

### **COMMUNITY ASSETS:**

Louisville has a wide variety of partners who are dedicated to improving the health of their community members. They have several successes related to policy, systems, and environmental changes to impact obesity.

- The Healthy Hometown Movement and Advisory Council is a community wide collaboration of over 100 members representing various sectors who is working to develop a culture where active living and healthy eating are the norm.
- Members serve on working committees to affect systems, policy, and environmental changes.
- The Center for Health Equity works to address the root causes of health disparities by supporting projects, policies and research working to change the correlation between health and longevity and socioeconomic status.
- The passage of a comprehensive smoke-free ordinance for every public building and workplace in Louisville, a city once considered the home of big tobacco.
- LMPHW has already held two community-wide educational forums on a transfat ban, to determine the community's readiness for such a policy.

### **LEADERSHIP TEAM:**

The Leadership Team includes high-level community leaders from multiple sectors who have the resources and capacity, that when combined, can make the proposed activities a reality. Members of the Louisville Leadership Team include leaders from the following offices and organizations:

- Mayor
- Director, Department of Public Health & Wellness
- Superintendent, Jefferson County Public Schools
- Councilwoman, Louisville Metro Council
- Dean, University of Louisville School of Public Health & Information Sciences
- Chairman, Board of Commissioners, Louisville Metro Housing Authority
- CEO and President, Greater Louisville YMCA
- Senior Adviser, Louisville Metro Parks and Cultural Affairs
- Board Member, Louisville Metro Board of Health
- President, Louisville Urban League

### **COMMUNITY STORY**

Ten year old Denzel, a student at Wheatley Elementary, thinks his neighborhood would be healthier if people there didn't litter or deal drugs...if there were no gunshots and children were playing in the park or riding their bikes. Denzel shared his vision with a photo of an alley in his neighborhood with a crumbling, garbage strewn road (photo attached).

Through the power of photography and old-fashioned storytelling, the Louisville Metro Department of Public Health and Wellness Center for Health Equity has worked with youth and community groups on getting their voices heard. This qualitative process can cover housing problems, violent crime, unemployment, and other issues folks deal with on a daily basis. Currently, we are working with youth from West Louisville and East Downtown to use digital storytelling as a way of identifying barriers to living a healthy life.

Denzel is one of several elementary, middle and high school students who created digital story telling projects on what can be done to make various Louisville neighborhoods healthier and safer places. Earlier this year their projects were displayed in an exhibit titled *The Children Shall Lead* that was presented to government and community leaders and representatives from local businesses.

"Digital storytelling is a grassroots approach to social action that puts cameras in the hands of the people often least empowered to affect change - children living in inner city neighborhoods." said Dr. Adewale Troutman, director of the Louisville Metro Department of Public Health and Wellness. "These students want to be part of the solutions to neighborhood health problems."

To see more students' digital story telling projects visit [www.louisvilleky.gov/Health/equity](http://www.louisvilleky.gov/Health/equity).

### **COMMUNITY CONTACT**

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